




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2021

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.18 pm): I rise to speak on the Transport and Resources Committee's report examining the Auditor-General's Report 16: 2019-20, *Licensing builders and building trades*. The report was tabled in parliament on 28 July 2021. I thank the committee secretariat, the Queensland Audit Office, the QBCC and the former department of housing and public works for their assistance with the committee's examination. I also acknowledge the work of the members of the former transport and public works committee, which commenced this inquiry during the previous parliament. I am quite new to the committee myself, so it was well before my time. Making this statement today encouraged me to read through all the papers, and it is really interesting.

The committee was tasked with considering the Auditor-General's finding in relation to the Auditor-General's report. The Auditor-General assessed whether QBCC effectively regulates the building industry by issuing and managing licences in a fair and balanced way. The Auditor-General made 11 recommendations, including: strengthening controls and improving planning and reporting, as well as highlighting a critical need for the QBCC to commit resources and build capability in its transition to becoming a risk focused, insights driven regulator. This transition has shifted QBCC's attention to areas that pose the greatest risk or threaten community safety and economic confidence in the building sector. The committee is satisfied that the QBCC is taking appropriate action to address the Auditor-General's recommendations.

A strong construction industry plays an important part in the Palaszczuk government's economic recovery plan. The QBCC plays an integral role by promoting confidence in the building and construction industry through its work regulating our building standards, remedying defective building work and providing advice and support to builders and consumers.

Building and construction in Queensland is a \$46 billion industry which employs 10 per cent of our population. Since the Palaszczuk government's election in 2015, we have been working hard to boost confidence in the industry after the Newman LNP government gutted building industry regulation. This was a terrible decision by the LNP that had horrendous repercussions for consumers and the Queensland building industry alike. After a number of high-profile building and construction industry collapses in 2015-16, we committed to reviewing security of payments for subcontractors and tradies. Our Building Industry Fairness Act, introduced in August 2017, has improved confidence in the industry by making sure Queensland's subcontractors and tradies are paid in full and on time, every time.

We have stimulated confidence in the industry in response to COVID-19 with the \$100 million Works for Tradies social housing construction program. We have invested \$106 million in the building market for new homes. We have provided further support through \$100 million in small business grants to help small businesses respond and adapt to COVID-19 impacts.

Through strong investment and strengthened regulation, our building and construction industry has boomed. New housing approvals in Queensland are up 41 per cent compared with the period before the pandemic. I can certainly attest to it in my electorate, where Ripley is one of the fastest growing suburbs in South-East Queensland. To this end, QBCC's oversight of our building and construction industry has never been more important.

However, the Auditor-General has identified significant changes to the industry which prompted its audit. It notes that over the past 20 years the industry has become increasingly complex, with a growth in high-rise and medium-density housing and events in other jurisdictions and overseas which have highlighted building standard issues.

There have been changes in legislation that have impacted QBCC's role as a regulator and changes to licensing requirements for people working in the building and construction industry. The Auditor-General's report looked at how QBCC was faring in relation to licensing building, monitoring and enforcing compliance, providing education and support, and managing the reporting performance. Pleasingly, QBCC accepted all findings and 11 recommendations made by the Auditor-General. The QBCC has informed the committee that it is committed to delivering all 11 recommendations. Six of the 11 recommendations have been delivered already, and work is continuing on delivering the remaining five recommendations.

The Transport and Resources Committee has noted the Auditor-General's concerns that QBCC's transition to a risk focused, insights driven regulator has been hindered by a lack of resources, skills and capability. The committee notes that it is essential that QBCC completes this transition as soon as possible and considers that there is a need to ensure the QBCC has sufficient resources—both human and financial—to make this transition. I commend the report to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Before I call the next speaker, member for Ipswich, I note the use of unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

Ms HOWARD: I withdraw.